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MIDEAST - KURDS:

PARIS, OCT 12, REUTER -- IRAQI AND KURDISH FORCES ARE ENGAGED IN HEAVY FIGHTING IN NORTHERN IRAQ WHICH COULD THREATEN IRAQ'S OIL FIELDS, THE MASS CIRCULATION NEWSPAPER FRANCE-SOIR SAID TODAY

THE PAPER, CITING WELL INFORMED SOURCES, SAID THE FIGHTING HAD BEEN GOING ON FOR 24 HOURS, BREAKING A CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT WORKED OUT THREE YEARS AGO BETWEEN THE KURDS AND THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT.

FRANCE-SOIR SAID THAT AFTER A "VERY BLOODY" BATTLE NEAR THE TOWN OF CHIRAN, KURDISH FORCES HAD REPULSED AN IRAQI ATTACK AND TAKEN CONTROL OF A HILL POSITION AT MAKTUB, 22 MILES NORTHEAST OF MOSSUL, WHICH LIES IN THE HEART OF THE IRAQI OIL FIELDS.

THE REPORTED ATTACK BY THE KURDS, UNDER AUTONOMIST LEADER MULLAH MUSTAPHA AL-BARZANI, COMES AT A TIME WHEN AN ESTIMATED 16,000 TO 18,000 IRAQI SOLDIERS ARE FIGHTING AGAINST ISRAEL ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS FRONT WITH SYRIAN TROOPS, ALONG WITH IRAQI AIR AND TANK UNITS.

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